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How John Bull Lost London or the Capture of the Channel Tunnel

BY "GRIP."

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HOW JOHN BULL LOST LONDON;

OR,

THE CAPTURE OF THE CHANNEL TUNNEL.

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HOW JOHN BULL LOST LONDON.

JOHN SMITH'S VISITORS.

“Now den, you von sacré Inglisman, you be kvick and make ze dinner here, or I vill make you ze pleasure of anoder cold bath. And, sacré bleu, find some odder domino, or you make von tumble out of ze window. Canaille! you tink we come here to be miserable like von John Bull, with your sacré portare-bière and your bifteck? You take my conseil, mon ami, and be kvick vit ze good

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wine, ze domino, and ze dinner, or par-bleu you shall see somesing."

Could the reader have looked in upon the scene where these cheering words were being uttered on the 4th of June, 1900, he would have witnessed a sight of a somewhat interesting character.

The Englishman thus addressed was no waiter in a French hotel, but a British tradesman at home, and the speaker no French gentleman on a pleasure trip, but a sergeant belonging to an invading army that had just before triumphantly entered London.

John Smith's first experience of an invader was not a pleasant one. Accustomed to live quietly in a little street just running off the Strand, and there to sell butter and bacon and eggs in

sufficient quantity to maintain himself and small family, he had certainly never looked forward to a time when a French sergeant and four infantry privates would be billeted upon him, and would choose his upstairs parlour as their sleeping and living room. And now that that time had arrived, he altogether failed to enjoy it. But in the few hours during which these gentlemen had honoured him with a visit he had learnt sufficient to know that anything like remonstrance was impolitic. His first remark, when he saw their filthy mess utensils on his light Brussels carpet, and his piano turned into a sort of cupboard for preserved soups, while a silk-covered couch that had been his pride was made into a bed for the sergeant, and some of

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his chimney ornaments were flung out of the window as being in the way, had been met by his being prodded with a sword-bayonet, and then held while a decanter of water was poured down his back.

So that he had gathered from this incident the impression that he had better submit to all with as good a grace as possible ; and when screamed at by the sergeant because the domino-box, which he had produced to order, was a small one, and wholly beneath the dignity of a French soldier, and ordered to fetch wine instead of stout, and to put a good dinner on the table, he hastened to obey, for he neither wanted to be thrown out of the window as threatened, nor treated to another cold bath.

For this reason he very naturally made as much haste as possible, and soon the portly tradesman was to be seen waiting behind the chairs of five of the roughest villains that ever disgraced a uniform, as they sat at his own table, and abused him roundly almost every minute.

It was well, however, that he did so. His promptitude had saved him from many a horror that had befallen his neighbours, who had seen their wives and daughters insulted, and in some instances had themselves been badly wounded by the ruffianly invaders. John Smith was only pillaged and cuffed a little after he had once been prodded and submitted to the cold bath. It is true he saw his plate and knives go to fill the haversacks of his invaders, and was obliged to let them

take the contents of his till. But after all his was not a specially hard case; it must be confessed he deserved more.

For John Smith had contributed as much as anybody, or more than some people, to the very state of things which he now deplored.

He it was who had seconded a resolution at Exeter Hall against a proposed large increase of the English navy.

He it was who had taken shares in the Anglo-French Channel Tunnel.

He it was who had attended a great meeting to protest against the "commercial interests of England and France, those great sister nations being made subordinate to the fears of needless and foolish panic-mongers who declared the

making of the Channel tunnel to be a danger to England."

He it was who had signed a monster petition, after that tunnel had been begun, against the proposed augmentation of the army in England.

He it was who had "always felt" that all ideas of a French invasion were nonsensical, and knew that the "best interests" of the neighbouring nations lay in peace, and said so wherever he went.

And he it was that always was confident that the British volunteer would prove quite equal to the protection of this country against any invader.

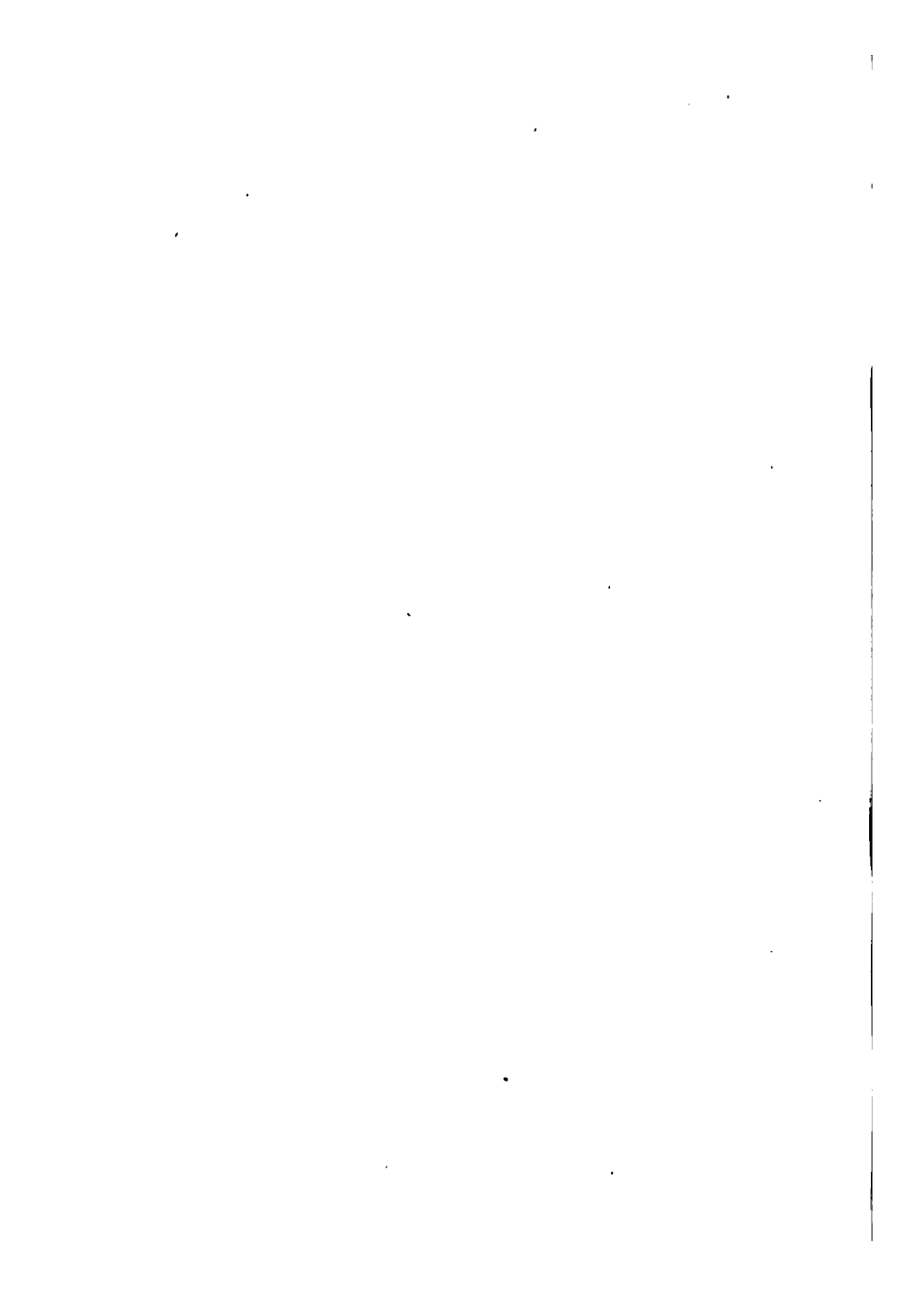
John Smith was not singular. He had sung "Rule Britannia" in company with a good many others, and had in a dull sort of way believed his country

was quite invincible, till the rough awakening which we have just noticed came—and then John Smith was in despair, as well he might be.

John Smith had never foreseen that some day, under an adventurous and ambitious Frenchman, France, hopeless of ever beating back German legions from Alsace and Lorraine, might turn her attention to gaining laurels and consolation elsewhere, and might first, on the Mediterranean and in Egypt, and next in the humiliation of England and the possession of the Channel Islands, the Newfoundland fishing coast, the West Coast of Africa, and enlarged territory in India, satisfy herself for the disasters which Germany had inflicted upon her.

But John Smith had been no blinder than many others. He might have known better ; but he, with many of his friends, preferred not to be reasonably led, and when the storm burst he was consequently thunderstruck.

The triumph of the alien had been complete.



THE NEW TUNNEL.

It was a glorious day when the Channel Tunnel was first declared open for traffic.

Both in London and Paris there was amongst the masses immense jubilation.

A minority of intelligent Englishmen were but little disposed to join in the hilarity, for they feared that a huge, irreparable blunder was being made, a blunder which would result in disaster to their country; but they were laughed to scorn. "There are mawworms in every age—we cannot expect to be free

from them now," wrote one paper. "Those who fail to rejoice at the prospect which is opened by the establishment of the eternal bonds of friendship which must henceforth exist between England and France are either bereft of reason or patriotism," said another journal. "We hail the opening of the Channel Tunnel as the first step toward universal confidence and peace," said a third. So that the minority found it useless to protest.

Very naturally the monarch of this country and the President of the French Republic found it incumbent upon them to exchange congratulations.

The Houses of Parliament and the French Assembly and Senate passed resolutions of cordiality and friendship.

The London and Paris municipalities sent each other flattering greetings.

It was agreed that the opening of the tunnel should be celebrated with a national salute.

The opening was of course the occasion of a great international banquet.

The French Ambassador and the English Foreign Minister sat side by side. Distinguished men from both countries thronged the banqueting hall. The flags of England and France covered the walls and ceiling. Mottoes of congratulations and friendship were to be seen everywhere. Tens of thousands of people thronged Dover to see the first train start, bearing a present of English manufactures to the poor of Paris. It was a tremendous day.

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Of course there were speeches in both the French and English language, expressive of undying friendship and confidence.

“It is,” said the chairman, “a proof of amity which for ever stamps the dying years of the nineteenth century with glory. No achievement in any age, or any clime, equals this vast and glorious undertaking of ours. It is the greatest hostage ever given to peace; it might almost be called a bridge to the Millennium. Henceforth the great and proud peoples, whose separation by the boisterous sea has been the only hindrance to their perfect knowledge and esteem of each other, will live as twins. Commerce will vastly increase; mutual interests will overwhelm all petty dis-

trusts ; we may speak different tongues, but we shall be joined together by common sentiments—for the future, England and France are one great community ! ”

Of course such sentiments as these found a great echo in the hearts of the French visitors who were present. “ They touched,” said the Ambassador, “ the deepest chords of their nature. They had always felt that the more they knew of England the greater was their love for her, and that any increase in the facilities of communication between the two nations was an augmentation of their mutual happiness. Side by side England and France would in future advance, a model of friendship, which the whole world must admire. Their

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interests being essentially different, and both being in the foremost rank of civilization and the arts of peace, they would found by their union an example of amity, which must ere long become universal. France," he concluded, "to-day folds England to her heart in an eternal, loving embrace."

Then the guns fired, the tens of thousands of people cheered; healths were drunk; the first train started; telegrams were sent by hundreds in congratulation; and the Channel Tunnel was opened.

Needless to say, next morning the leading articles of the daily papers on both sides of the Channel were full of the subject. The French smiled a little, it is true, at the enfranchisement of the

frontiers, and half hinted that England had at last ceased to be insular; that with her birth as a continental nation had come new responsibilities and new duties—but that was all. There was nothing more menacing than that.

The English papers, on the other hand, with some very few exceptions indeed, employed their most lively and brilliant language to commemorate the event. "To-day," wrote the leading journal, "we enter upon a new era of prosperity, for our interests becoming identical with those of France, the energies of both peoples will be concentrated on the task of making both nations prosperous." "England and France," said another, "are in the position of two fond sisters, who having

been for long years rudely separated, become once more reunited, and secure that friendship which annihilation alone can destroy ;” while another bitterly remarked, “It’s not too much to say, that had the miserable faction which opposed the making of the tunnel been allowed to have its way, we should have for ever missed that knock of fortune at our door, which comes but once to nations as to men, and which, once disregarded, can never be recalled.” The great so-called comic paper showing at the same time a cartoon, in which England and France, like two nymphs, wreathed each other with roses. The rejoicings were complete. Nothing now remained except for the tunnel to pay the expenses of working it, and this it very shortly did.

The ratiocinations of those who prophesied it would be a commercial failure proving incorrect, they too, were overwhelmed with obloquy. There was naturally a great rush upon the tunnel for the conveyance of commercial samples and travellers. The novelty of the undertaking, the increased means of communication, the easier method of transit,—all tended to this: it might not last for ever, but certainly the success was at first an acknowledged fact. Those who had opposed it were, in fact, beaten back at every turn; they had been proved wrong, and their opinions were wholly at a discount.

It need scarcely be said that now, when they pleaded the necessity of an augmented English army and a different system of enlistment, and pointed to the

immense forces of France, they were laughed to scorn. Their "alarmist" doctrines were compared to their prophecies, that the tunnel could not be continued, and that it would not pay; and they were advised to direct their energies to some worthier cause. They were begged, too, not to attempt to sow seeds of distrust between two nations, who henceforth had but the preservation of peace before them, and whose interests could never be made to clash, except by the ill-advised efforts of unpatriotic men. Public opinion was against them; they had to seek refuge in silence.

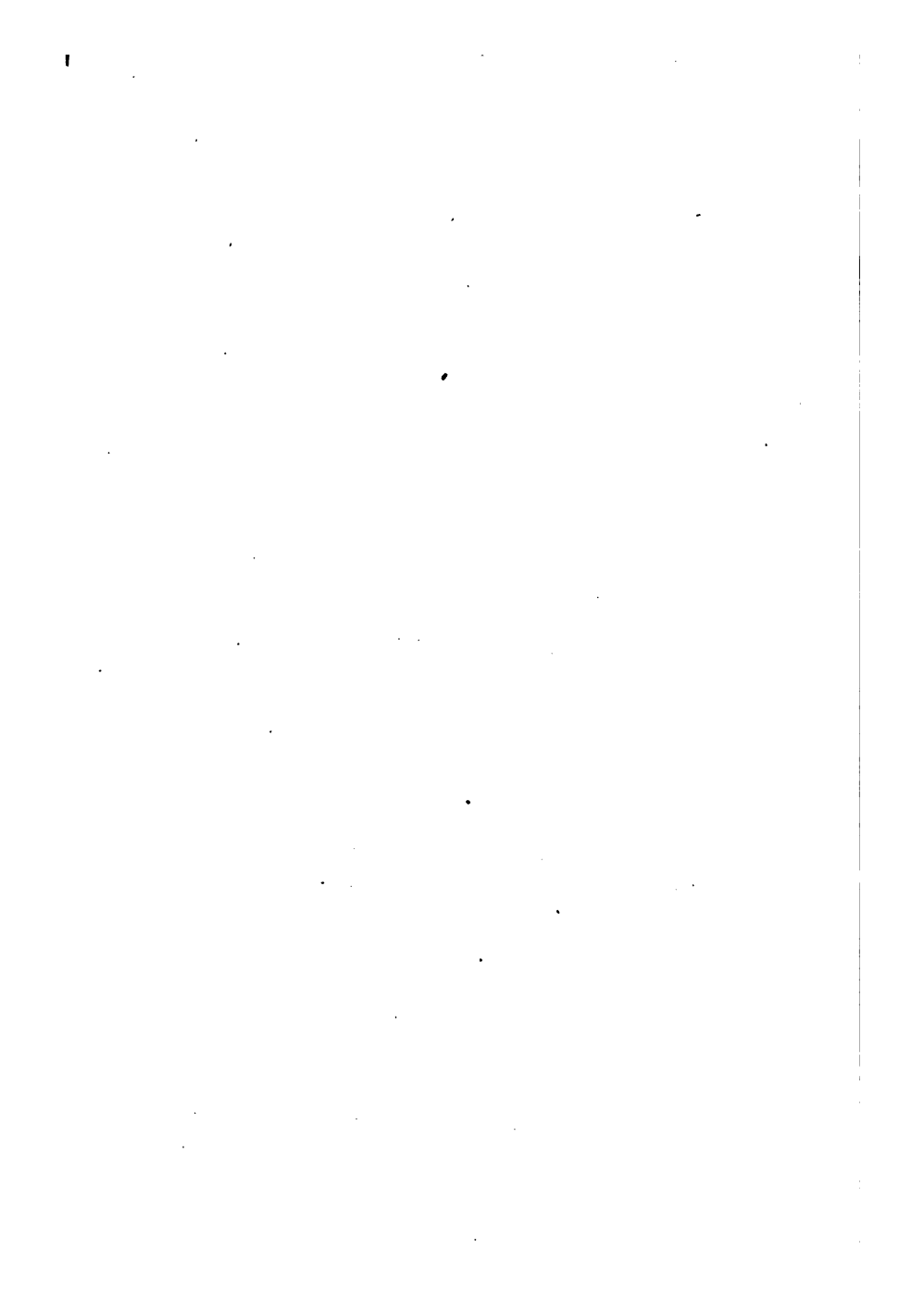
It went still further; it opposed even what were advanced by some as necessary and reasonable precautions. It

objected to the "proposed erection" of a fort at the mouth of the tunnel; it would cost a million when armed, and "it looked like distrust" they said; so that the tunnel was practically left to take care of itself, with the exception of some electrical apparatus, for flooding or blowing it up, in case of necessity; the wires working which ran into the fortress on the heights.

"No one can ever dream of trying to take the tunnel," remarked the "wise ones," "war would have to be declared first, and then of course we should prepare immediately. It is no source of danger whatever to England."

And then they contented themselves with leaving it under the command of the forts on the hills.

THE SURPRISE



THE SURPRISE.

ON the evening of a bright day in May there arrived by the Channel Tunnel at Dover a large number of French holiday-makers. The "Allied Brothers of the Amity Lodges of the Freemasons," so the newspapers of Paris stated, had determined to hold a *fête* in England, and three special trains had brought the holiday-makers through. They had engaged beds everywhere, the "Lord Warden" and all the other hotels were crowded to excess; but nobody thought anything of that, for there had

been several such *fêtes*, on a somewhat smaller scale it is true, but still *fêtes* of a similar kind before. It was known, though not specially noted at the time, however, that just at that precise date a couple of French army corps were carrying out a series of peace manoeuvres in the neighbourhood of Amiens.

Nobody troubled about what the French did; they were England's firm allies.

It's true there had been a little misunderstanding about the right of France to menace the Egyptians with an armed force, should they not hasten to confer certain concessions upon various great French financial companies; and true, moreover, that Tripoli, having some time since been annexed to Tunis, had

been a matter of some contention between the governments of London and Paris; but these were small matters which diplomacy would certainly smooth over: nobody gave them more than a passing thought.

Yet England had gradually become more and more isolated from other nations, and was not, so far as her foreign policy was concerned, on a formidable footing.

The cry of a former premier to Austria, "Hands off!" had never been forgotten by that power or her ally Germany; Russia had continued to intrigue against her in the East; Italy counted for little, and was ready to be friendly with the strongest, whoever that might be; France alone was England's friend.

There had been rumours, uncomfortable ones to some thinkers, to the effect that Germany would not be unwilling to witness a further extension of French power on the Mediterranean or elsewhere, would she but agree to let Alsatian and Lorrainean territory alone. And there were other stories afloat of a proposed Russian and French understanding, by which the former power offered Egypt to France, if in return her own hankerings after the Persian Gulf were supported at Paris.

But the "well-informed" statesmen of the English Cabinet knew there was nothing in all these stories, and quite disregarded them; for the President of the French Republic, although notoriously an adventurous man, anxious to

please the French vanity by some successful foreign enterprises, was a personal friend of one of the ministers, and had assured him that all the reports were moonshine.

And they, by assurances duly communicated to the Government press, calmed the minds of all but very exigent persons—the discontented ones who were “always imagining some fresh danger.”

When, then, on that fine May evening the tourists arrived, nobody thought anything of their visit, nor was it considered at all suspicious; nor when later on, by an hour or two, two French steamers, which might have been loaded with apples or arms, drew up near the Admiralty Pier, and sent word ashore that they would be examined by the

Customs' officer in the morning. It was all so natural.

Dover that night slept tranquilly. It had not a large garrison, for troubles in Ireland and a reduced army system had not left many men in the lines above town. But it knew it was secure; none but the good and friendly French were near, and they were only tourists.

Only tourists!

The clock had only just struck midnight, when all on a sudden these tourists might have been seen hurrying towards the Tunnel station; while coming from the French steamers were many men, bearing in their arms bundles of rifles.

There was a sound as of a scuffle and of a shot or two fired, but it only drew

the attention of a very few. The tourists had all disappeared.

But an alarm had been given, and the police had been sent down to the tunnel mouth; and then, the alarm continuing, a party of soldiers had been sent.

What could it all mean?

Only this, that the tourists were rapidly ensconcing themselves behind the railway material and the mouth of the tunnel, were throwing up earthworks and cutting trenches, and quickly converting the position they had taken up into a military entrenchment.

Alarm came. What troops there were in Dover were sent in good earnest now to attack the stranger, for it was clear that they had got the tunnel in their hands, and that if they could hold it for six

hours, no one would be able afterwards to dislodge them.

But the attack was not by any means the easy job it had looked. It was night time and the men, hidden behind earth and railway trucks, could not be seen.

In vain the musketry rattled in the direction of the tunnel, the defenders of the frontier were safely under shelter and in an impregnable position.

Artillery must be brought up, and the tunnel destroyed—that was clear, the order was given.

But the artillery was ineffective, and it was now found that the electric wire provided for blowing up the tunnel and the apparatus for sluicing it had all been seized and cut; the tunnel mouth

must be retaken by hand-to-hand fighting.

Telegrams were forthwith despatched to London, and the Dover garrison led up to the fight. It numbered, however, not many more than the invaders, and these had the immense advantage of being under cover. There was many an English soldier who bit the dust that night.

And now a couple of hours having passed, the sound of the firing from the tunnel works became louder and more sustained—the invaders being reinforced and rapidly becoming more powerful than their assailants.

In vain the general commanding at Dover gallantly led his men to the attack again and again till he fell in the hottest of the fray.

In vain the next in command sacrificed his own life and that of a third of his gallant troops.

The enemy was every half hour becoming more and more powerful; the Dover garrison must retreat if it would save itself and its fortifications.

Up the hill, slowly fighting every inch of the way, this brave little force now might be seen retreating, anxiously hoping for reinforcements from Shorncliffe or Chatham, and knowing full well that once beaten into the forts it could not protect the line by which the relieving troops could come.

But it was all too much to hope to be able to hold the ground, the swelling numbers of the strangers told them that; the long lines of men in uniform

that had now superseded the tourists said this plainly ; the little fighting force had nothing for it but to get inside its lines as rapidly as possible, sacrificing many men even in doing that.

While the invaders, making a rush for the railway leading to London, tore up the lines and entrenched the road by which reinforcements must come.

It was evident the situation was desperate.

Let it not be supposed that in London the Government, on getting information of what was transpiring at Dover, was supine ; on the contrary, it acted with praiseworthy energy.

The Secretary for War was at a reception of the wife of the Foreign

Minister when the startling news arrived, and his first impulse was to rush up to his colleague to demand what it all meant. .

“I am wholly at a loss to know,” was the reply, “except that this evening the French Ambassador did certainly say to me that his Government viewed our protest with regard to Egypt more seriously than he wished, and that he trusted the situation might not become strained. But I took him to be joking.”

“Joking?” roared the War Minister. “Do you know that the French have come through the tunnel and taken Dover since midnight, three hours ago?”

To say that both the ministers were thunderstruck hardly describes their

condition. But they acted: the one leaving the company immediately, and driving round to seek for explanation from the French Ambassador, whom he, curiously enough, did not find at home; the other to the War Office, whither he summoned everybody attached to the staff.

By daylight troops were being despatched in the direction of Dover from Shorncliffe, Chatham, Portsmouth, and Aldershot; 20,000 men were on the way; the Guards in London were being got ready to go southward by midday; the volunteers were being called for; energy was visible everywhere.

Midday found every line from the north, east, and west laden with troops; all ordinary traffic had been stopped; by

night time it was announced that 75,000 men, of whom half were regular soldiers, were on the way.

But whither ?

News from Dover announced that the French force there had increased to an army corps, and was being augmented every hour. While it was certain that if the various detachments coming from different parts of the country essayed to attack Dover they would be cut off in detail.

There must be an order given for a concentration upon various points. Dover had gone and could not be retaken for the present, and the whole available army must be concentrated on the Surrey Hills till it was ready to march.

So said the War Minister after hearing a hundred different opinions.

"London must be defended," said everybody; "and we may have a couple of hundred thousand French troops upon us before we know where we are."

And so a concentration was convened as near the metropolis as possible.

"We can always move forward when we think fit," said the generals.

ENGLAND INVADED.

THE events of the few days that now passed had taken England completely by surprise.

On the night after the French Ambassador had made the remonstrance with the English Foreign Secretary, he had quitted the official residence of the minister, taken train direct from Victoria to Paris, and had passed through the tunnel by the last train, never troubling himself about the formality of asking for his passport.

His Chargé d'affaires explained

blandly to the Minister next morning that the Ambassador had gone to Paris for explanations, and that pending the absence of his Excellency, he could only refer to some sealed directions, which were now found to contain orders to the entire personnel of the Embassy to leave England for France immediately, *viâ* Ostend, taking the archives with them ; a step which he proposed to carry out.

Almost simultaneously with this piece of intelligence came other news of an unsatisfactory nature.

A large force of French troops were reported, by telegraph, to have embarked for Egypt, under the convoy of a great fleet of ironclads.

Under other circumstances this would not perhaps have been a serious matter,

for but for the suddenness of the action of the enemy there would have been sufficient English ships on the Mediterranean station to have attacked the convoy; but unhappily at this present moment there were very few vessels of war of a superior class in the squadron.

Two or three incidents had contributed to this state of things.

Ever since the year 1882 the French ironclad navy had equalled in number and size and in weight of metal that of England. In that year and the succeeding one, indeed, no fewer than eleven large ironclads had been launched from French dockyards, while England had only turned out three. And the race for superiority on the French side had gone on, till England had actually

fewer powerful ships of war than France.¹

Another fact contributing to the comparative weakness of the English Navy in the Mediterranean at this crisis was the vast quantity of ground which the British fleet had to cover, both in the Northern and the Southern seas; while France could keep all her big vessels at home.

Yet another fact was the result of a clever little trick which had just before been played by France upon England. By means of intrigue trouble had been set on foot in China, and France had then persuaded England in view of her im-

¹ See Correspondence in the Service papers on this subject, and especially Sir Astley Cooper Key's letters.

mense interests in the East to act as the mandatory of civilization and send half-a-dozen ironclads to the Chinese coast.

This proposal had been flattering to British pride; the people here saw in it a proof of France's disinterested friendship and a recognition of English rights. It increased their confidence in France—and it disposed of six powerful ships.

So that the Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty knew that little could be done in the Mediterranean, except to send every ship available there to the Suez Canal, and through it to India, to bring up troops to oppose the French in Egypt.

But more ships were wanted still, for the coast must be watched to see that no

men were landed to effect a counter movement in favour of those already at Dover, and a general concentration was ordered on the southern coasts.

Rumours came that the Hampshire shore was threatened, and the fleet met there.

Another rumour mentioned Pevensey Bay as menaced. French ships had been seen off the coast; part of the fleet was sent there.

Then there came authentic news this time; the French had landed in force just above Southend, and were marching on London with great rapidity.

It was evident matters were approaching a crisis.

Of course the English all this time were not supine. A considerable army

was on the hills above Guildford. Another large force lay on the Chelmsford road. A couple of army corps had been mobilised in the midland counties and were marching to London. A large army was being collected in Scotland. And Liverpool, with Manchester, was sending an army corps southward.

But there was no plan of action; everybody was bewildered; orders were given and countermanded repeatedly; besides which, it became evident that the enemy was in too great force to be beaten back, unless every available Englishman could be brought into action at once.

The million and a half of French soldiers which for years England had regarded with calm supineness, had

sent near eight hundred thousand men to fight England, a hundred thousand to Egypt, four hundred and fifty thousand by the tunnel, and the rest on the eastern coast. And as these myriads poured along the road, the English saw that scattered army corps, composed of regulars, militia, and volunteers, scantily supplied with army commissariat, armed with inferior weapons, badly supported with artillery, and commanded by men unused to war, could not hope to do much. All they could hope for was to save the capital.

Now it so chanced that England herself had done a great deal to assist any enemy in capturing London.

When in 1870 the forts on the Thames²

² See construction of Coal House Fort, Shorn Mead Fort, and Cliff Fort.

had been finished at immense expense to the nation, it had been suggested by practical men who inspected them that the fact of their being only armed towards the water, and being wholly unprotected on the land side, militated greatly against their usefulness in case of an invasion. It was shown that although with their heavy guns they might hope to do immense destruction should a fleet of an enemy attempt to force the Thames, they could not be held even against field guns, to say nothing of a siege train, could an enemy ever land on the unprotected shore above Southend, and that they would fall immediately into the hands of such an enemy, who would then be able to bring his ships up the river, and protect his flank with these ships at the same time. It was moreover shown,

that at a very slight expense to the country these forts might have been made impregnable on the land side, though this proposal had been overruled. "In the event of a war," the objectors said, "we can always throw up earthworks. It would only be a matter of a week."

And so the French found the Thames practically at their mercy and came up to Tilbury with great rapidity.

Their cavalry spread all over the country ; their ships of war pushed into the river, and were only stopped at last by a number of large vessels being sunk across their path.

There had been no torpedo defence, for the great forts on the Thames had been relied upon.

And now it lay with the French

to blow up the sunken hulls as quickly as possible, and move further up.

Still in the path of this army there was, as has been said, a considerable force; and this being strongly entrenched at Purfleet, held so good a position as to stop the further advance of the French army for the present. The enemy's horse pillaged half the county of Essex; but the main body of the army was checked.

And meanwhile, at Guildford a force of two hundred and fifty thousand men were assembled to give the invader battle.

The position was a good one, and against equal numbers might have been held successfully.

On came the French army to attack it.

**THE BATTLE OF GUILDFORD AND
CAPTURE OF LONDON.**

THE BATTLE OF GUILDFORD, AND CAPTURE OF LONDON.

THOSE who have never taken part in a battle can scarcely realize what it is like. The obscurity that attends every movement, the apparent confusion of all the arrangements, the intermittent puff and noise of the guns, the rattle of the musketry, the shriek of the falling shells, the hurrying up of troops, the immense rapidity of modern attack, the deadliness of the fire, the general din—all these combine to fill the outsider for the first time with amazement.

The firing of the artillery seems much nearer than it really is; the noise of the passing shell tells painfully on the tyro, who imagines every *obus* is coming into the very pit of his stomach; the whistling of the bullets seems to indicate the most imminent danger; the haste of the various movements is confusing and perplexing.

A battle-ground in these modern days, when a large force is engaged, covers a large area. Divisions and brigades act apparently very independently of each other. They are really, on each side, guided by one master mind, who has the plan of battle, such as it is, in his mind; but to those who look on, it certainly frequently seems as though a great many of the minor commanders are acting upon their own judgment.

To a certain extent this is so. The commander of an army corps receives the idea of the battle from his chief, and has either to hold the position he has or take another. He may be, and probably has been, in addition to this, told to observe the effects of certain movements, upon one or both of his flanks, of friendly corps, and to take certain measures in certain events. The rest is in his hand. If he be incompetent, he is beaten; if capable, he will gain a little, and his superior a great deal, of credit.

You, as you watch the fight, see little white puffs of smoke issuing from trees or brushwood all about you; then a cloud of what used to be called skirmishers, but are now styled riflemen, in extended order, emerge from some cover where

they had been hiding, and rush forward, taking advantage of every clump of gorse, every hedge, every rising in the ground, to fire at the enemy in front. The riflemen fall in many cases as they advance, under the steady fire of the foe which rushes out from yonder trees; but on the line goes, fed every moment by fresh men, who augment its power and help to roll the tide of battle onward.

As the dark forms dot the grass you notice that the enemy is now bringing artillery as well as rifle-fire into play, and with case, or shrapnel, or ordinary shell plying the advancing host.

Perhaps at this juncture you observe, just behind the men who have pushed forward in open order, a denser column

of men, going forward at the double in grand divisions, and supported heavily with a well-sustained artillery fire; while not far behind one of the flanks of the advancing column may just be discerned some cavalry, watching its opportunity to move. The column is about taking the enemy's position.

You see at once that a crisis is at hand.

The utmost rapidity is displayed, for the troops in the open are under a lively and destructive fire. The defenders too of the position attacked are being reinforced, and every minute renders the task of beating them more difficult. Not a moment must be lost if the place is to be taken.

On rush the men in extended order

till they near the position which is being assailed, and which is at this instant exposed to a galling shell fire; and then lying down, let the denser column sweep by upon the place.

With a noise like the bursting of Pandemonium, the guns and the rifles of the enemy now bellow out; volley succeeds volley, shells are fired incessantly, the column staggers, the moment is intensely exciting.

When suddenly the defenders of the position flee, the cavalry of the attack rushes forward to sabre the fugitives, the column runs in to secure the works, and the fight in that direction is won. Or it may be that under the incessant infantry and artillery fire the column finds advance impossible, in which

case it slowly falls back, under volleys of musketry, and losing many men every foot of the way, foiled and discomfited.

Such were the kind of scenes which were occurring all along the line above Guildford on the day we are describing.

For the most part the English plan was that of defence.

The British general who commanded—Lord Wolseley—(lately made a peer) had made a good deal of what was naturally an excellent position, as the cover thrown up for the guns, trenches, and demilunes without number, sufficiently attested.

A large proportion of his force was composed of militia and volunteer element; but there was a very considerable leaven

of good seasoned troops, and these he placed to the best advantage.

Yet with so large a force at his command he laboured under these disadvantages, that an immense area of ground was covered; that owing to the haste with which the force had been got together, the communications established were imperfect; that some of the generals under him were hardly to be expected to handle so many men as were entrusted to them; and that he had no one with him on whom to rely in case of an emergency.

More than this, his left flank, which rested upon Leatherhead, was weakly and badly placed.

The French general was aware of this, and planned his attack accordingly.

At first he ostensibly essayed to drive the English from their position, and attacked all along the line, singling out the centre for a specially heavy attack at the moment when both flanks of the English army had been amused by feints.

But the firm shooting of the English volunteers and the steadiness of the regulars had defeated this plan, and it now became necessary to adopt another.

Up to this point the fight had been a brilliant, and for the English a successful one.

With his centre composed mainly of militia and volunteer soldiers, supported by a few battalions of line troops, and backed by the heavy Armstrong

40-pounder guns which the volunteers knew so well how to use, the English general had succeeded in repulsing six successive attacks upon what the French supposed to be his vital point.

Six times the French infantry came on in huge masses, supported by a heavy artillery fire, and preceded by immense numbers of riflemen, whose bullets filled the air above the heads of the Englishmen; but the Robin Hoods of Nottingham, and the gallant Manchester volunteers, and the East Suffolk infantry, and the Surrey rifles, together with some strong Kentish battalions, lying securely intrenched on the hill, each time reserved their return fire till the enemy was close upon them, and then delivered it with such withering effect as to send

the foe rolling swiftly down the hills again.

In this fight the loss of the English was not severe, for they were under cover, and carefully looked after by their officers, and did not show themselves to the enemy.

The artillery too had for some time been provided with their compressed steel shields capable of resisting a rifle bullet, and the guns being breechloaders the gunners were saved the experience of those who fought at Majuba Hill.

It would have fared better even than it did with the English, had they as infantry men all been armed with a good repeating rifle, as were their opponents.

Ever since the year 1882 the Germans and French had been adopting a

enemy, and had rendered the position almost impregnable.

He had this great advantage too, that the French could not afford to out-flank him. Any great movement on their part to the right of the English position would have separated them from their base; their hope was naturally either to beat the English army back bodily, or turn it away from their line of operation on London.

It will then be seen that the mistake of the English Commander-in-chief lay in rendering his right wing needlessly strong at the cost of his more weakly placed left wing, which must eventually suffer the brunt of the attack or be turned.

Nevertheless Sir Evelyn Wood's busi-

ness was to hold his own, and this he did admirably well.

He had good material—the Hampshire, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall militia and volunteers, twenty battalions of regular infantry, several batteries of field artillery, and a number of guns handled by volunteers. His flank was, as has been said, well covered by cavalry, consisting of the Household Brigade, three dragoon and three lancer regiments.

The French attack was determined, and was made from Godalming in the direction of Compton and Puttenham, with the infantry of two army corps supported by a hundred guns.

The shell rained all over the position, and for a moment rendered the defenders of the position a little unsteady. But

they were soon themselves again, and received the attack with great bravery.

The French pushed on, however, and making the most of any inequality in the ground and every hedge, at length swarmed up in front in such numbers that it looked for a moment as though they must win, when suddenly the fire of the British soldiers halted them and drove them back.

Then the only English charge of the battle was delivered, the men being sent out of their trenches to give the enemy the bayonet as they staggered on the slope; and the British volunteer for the first time used cold steel.

The shock was only a slight one, however, for the French did not seriously

wait for it, but got away as quickly as possible, their guns covering their retreat and forcing the English to desist from pursuit.

Then there was a lull, broken only by the sound of artillery, and then another attack, and yet another, with similar results, but unfollowed by any charge. And in this way the right of the English army held its own.

Not so happily situated was the left wing. Placed, as has been said, above Leatherhead and Dorking it held in itself a good position, but had on its flank the plains of Leatherhead, Epsom, and Walton.

The enemy had naturally seized upon Box Hill, and was now pushing round with all his available force in the direc-

tion of Epsom and Ashstead, with a view to turn the position.

The left wing, under the command of General Lord Chelmsford, had possibly no power to prevent this.

It was always afterwards claimed by that general that it rested with Lord Wolseley as commander-in-chief to have prevented this turning movement, by sending an army corps to his assistance, and by means of it rendering the turning movement an impossibility.

But be the fault whose it may, the result was the same.

The enemy had many more troops than the English, and could afford to spare nearly 200,000 men for this movement; so that while the English right and centre were both engaged, and

kept under the impression that they were the principal object of the French attack, the real movement of the day on the part of the enemy was taking place in the direction of Leatherhead—the movement which was settling the battle.

By night time five French army corps had turned the English left flank, leaving it masked by a strong force in front of it—a force that, it should be mentioned, continued to amuse it—and were rapidly moving on the metropolis, leaving 250,000 men to hold the English army in check. The move was observed when too late, and the English had nothing for it but to attempt to take up a new position close by, and still on the Surrey hills, and there await reinforcements.

Nearly 40,000 men of both nationalities lay dead and wounded on the ground at the conclusion of the battle of Guildford; but though the defenders still held the ground, they had gained no victory, for the foe had given them the slip, and was upon the back of London.

By morning the French army had passed through Kingston-on-Thames, Wimbledon, and Wandsworth, and had entered the metropolis, meeting with hardly more resistance than a single division might with ease have overcome.

The English had not been beaten in the open field, they had simply been outmanœuvred.

London was at the mercy of the invader.

The army facing the French who had

landed upon Southend had nothing for it but to retreat, lest it should be taken in rear by the force that had passed into London, and was fain to fall back northwards ; so that the next day saw nearly 400,000 Frenchmen in possession of the metropolis, the shipping of the great port, with all the vast stores of London in their hands, and their ships now in a position to push the rest of the way up the Thames. No such disaster had ever befallen a nation as that which now well-nigh overwhelmed this one ; and the heart of the country was nearly broken.

The capital was placed under a requisition immediately ; the troops were billeted upon the inhabitants as we have seen in the case of John Smith ; orders of the most stringent kind were issued

condemning to instant death any one who tampered with the communications of the invader between London and Dover. Torpedoes were placed in the Thames below where the invading fleet was stationed, in order to prevent any surprise from English vessels of war; and finally, propositions of peace were sent to York, whither the Government of England had with much precipitancy fled.

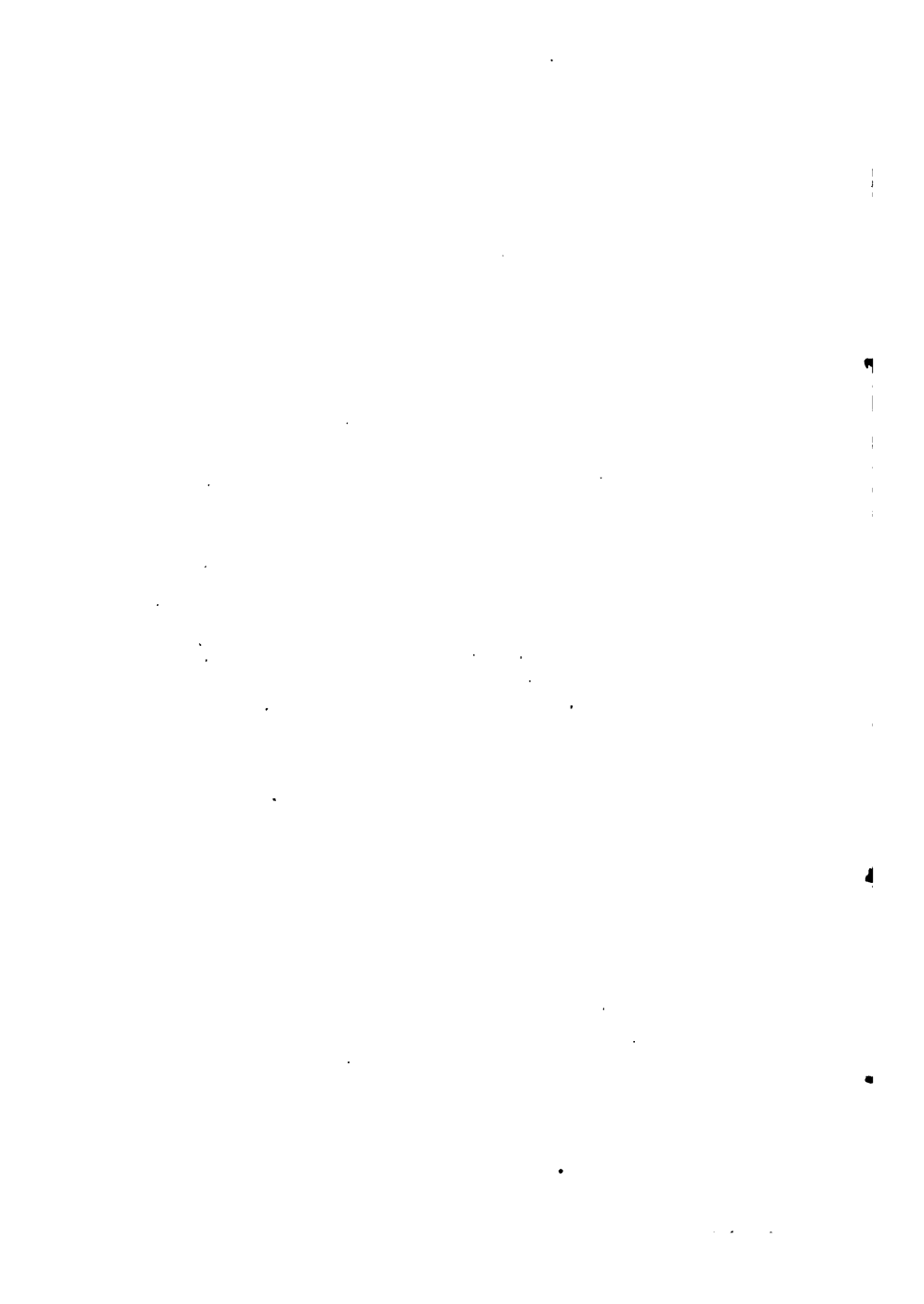
They were concise and clear. They included the surrender of Egypt to France, the cession of a considerable stretch of territory in Southern India, the giving up of all rights to the Newfoundland fishery, the cession of certain islands in the Pacific and of the Gold Coast of Africa, a large war indemnity,

and an acknowledgment of the right of France to erect and hold for ever a fortress of such strength as might be deemed necessary on the English side of the Channel Tunnel.

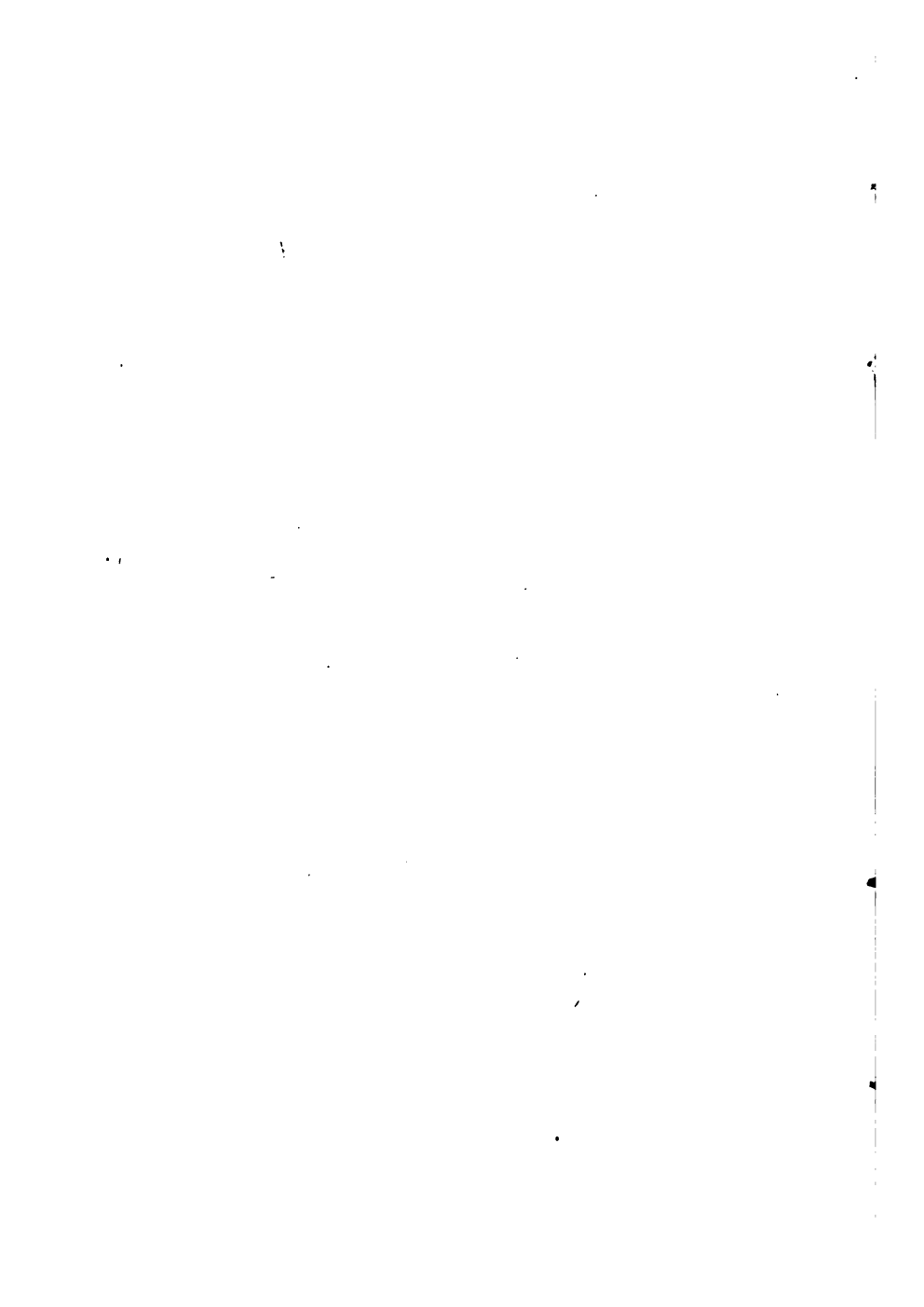
Failing the acceptance of these terms, the French army would advance northward forthwith, and exact a heavier penalty.

There were not lacking many in Birmingham who advocated surrender.

But Birmingham was the only town that counselled so craven a course.



LONDON'S SORROWS.



LONDON'S SORROWS.

WHAT London suffered during the period of its occupation will never be fully told. Very naturally, the bulk of the French army occupied certain strategic positions in the suburbs. But a very considerable number of troops were quartered inside the very heart of the metropolis, and did pretty much as they pleased. For two days the metropolis was in absolute disorder. Then the administration of the French officials began.

Three acts preceded all others.

Every arm and ammunition shop and every householder were deprived of lethal weapons.

All the available provisions of the capital were seized, no shopkeeper being allowed to touch more than a certain quantity of the stores in his own shop.

And troops were placed in every public building specially available for the purpose.

It was a new thing for the members of the Athenæum Club to see French privates reclining gracefully, and ungracefully too, for the matter of that, upon the luxurious couches which the forms of such magnates as bishops and judges alone had hitherto pressed. It was not without feelings the reverse of

joyful that the members of the Reform saw their splendid room turned into a bivouac for infantry, while the *habitués* of Brookes's and the Thatched House saw with undisguised disgust the free membership of their cosy haunts given to Gallic cavalrymen.

The theatrical managers had no special need of their theatres in the general confusion, for nobody would have dreamt of going to see a comedy, and leaving his house in the hands of the French troops billeted upon him. But they were certainly not particularly pleased when they saw their theatres turned into store-rooms, magazines, and hospitals. As for the more religious part of the inhabitants of the metropolis, they simply viewed with horror the

turning of their churches into barracks and stables, and in vain implored that at least this sacrilege might be averted.

But the progress of the French republic in the matter of irreligion had of late years been rapid, and the request was laughed to scorn.

The deprivation of firearms was not perhaps a matter of much consequence. It would have been sheer madness on the part of a miserably armed mob of citizens to have attempted any resistance against the overwhelming force of the French armies, and no one much regretted therefore the loss of rifles and revolvers.

The French, on the other hand, were much pleased to obtain for the asking English-made weapons, which were very

much better than anything they could get in their own country.

They wore the revolvers taken from English shops with much pride and greatly boasted of the acquisitions they had made.

Had they confined themselves to the taking of weapons there would have been little complaint then. But although the French commander, on entering the city, issued a declaration to the effect that no plundering would be permitted, nearly every jeweller's shop had been broken into and emptied within a few hours of the arrival of the troops, and those who went to complain were received with jeers and laughter.

The worst privation of all, however, from which the unfortunate people who

which brought in its train immense and needless suffering to the people.

Well-to-do tradesmen and merchants of Clapham, quiet residents of Brixton, stockbrokers and city men in Notting Hill, the honest people of Hornsey, Clapton, Stoke Newington, shared with the residents of Bow the terror of a loose careless soldiery, who, however they might have been controlled in the interior of the city, were lawless and brutal in the quieter and more out-of-the-way places.

Even Kensington was not proof against the misdeeds of the invader, and was as roughly treated as was Hackney or the Borough.

Happy the householder who did not have four or five ruffians in his house

to demand his constant services, and to rate him whenever he came within hearing or sight. The few who were free from this last torture counted themselves as fortunate in the extreme.

Still life was about as bad as it could be to be supported.

The British householder is not used to attend at a district office presided over by a couple of Frenchmen, and there demand in turn a ticket for bread, and perhaps occasionally a little smoked meat, such as bacon or ham, to be honoured perchance in his own shop by soldiers placed in charge. It was new to the London housekeepers to turn out *en queue*, and wait while the necessaries of life were there served out to them; and as they took their turn they cursed

from the bottom of their hearts the miserable national blunder which had brought all this suffering upon them.

The tunnel, however, had done its work, and to curse it was just then useless.

And now a new terror set in. The French commander-in-chief determined that all the strategic points of the metropolis should be fortified, and commanded every male in the capital to present himself at a certain specified station with a spade or a pick, ready for labour.

The next morning saw the good citizens of Clapham all in a long row working away at the navy's task, under the immediate superintendence of French engineers, who taught them how

to throw up earthworks on the Common, and fortify Balham and Tooting, pulling down here and there their own houses for the purpose of obtaining material for barricades where ordered. What transpired at Clapham went on everywhere; the people of Dulwich, Brixton, and New Cross; those of the north, as well as the east—not even excepting the west—were all made available, and initiated into the art of constructing fortifications without any delay.

To protest was useless; it was worse, it was dangerous.

The man who argued, was either whipped or prodded with a bayonet; he who resisted, was shot or hanged.

So that the work went on apace, and in a very short time London was, inside

her boundaries, provided with a better series of fortifications than she had ever before possessed.

When space was wanted in front of these works the houses were pulled or blown down ; no respect for property or the owners caused the French to hesitate. They had to do the work thoroughly, and they knew it ; and with so many labourers as they possessed, they had very little difficulty.

Naturally the horses in the metropolis were seized for the work, and thus all locomotion had to be done on foot ; for even electrically-driven engines, such as were then working on the Underground Railway, had only a certain storage of motive power, and such as could be supplied with it were required for

French commissariat or military purposes.

Many thousands of the unfortunate people consequently, when thrown out into the suburbs to work, were unable to return at night, and had to find what shelter they could hard by the scene of their labours. What horrors they endured can be imagined when the circumstances of their situation are considered.

Possibly the worst of all which they suffered was the prospect in the event of a great battle within the suburbs of being compelled to remain under fire and repair the works of their alien defenders as the fight progressed. The probability of this held out to them did not constitute the least of their sorrows, certainly.

As for the French they made their own dispositions quietly.

Their commander was aware that in bringing up his naval support as far as London he had committed an error, for the blocking of the mouth of the river was a possibility which he had to face.

On the other hand, however, he had a certain consolation in this, that the ships always constituted a strong line of defence; that they could always, in such a city as London, exact a terrible revenge should they be threatened, and that they would always be able to buy their own safety by offering to quit the city.

Then, again, London was a healthy camping-ground for the troops, and a

place which, supposing the property about was wholly disregarded, could be defended with much ease against an army in the open. Nobody had before seen so many regular troops holding a city, and the advantage, which the works constructed and the houses gave the defenders, was self-evident.

Besides, the capture of London had been the end and aim of the campaign. In the opinion of the French the dashing seizure of the metropolis of England would wring from Britain anything that France might desire; so rich a city could not be abandoned by the nation that owned it.

It was evident 600,000 men were not sufficient to conquer England; but reinforcements might come shortly from

France, for the tunnel was still held by Frenchmen, and a victory in Egypt would leave the Government of Paris free to forward at least another 200,000 men to England.

Altogether beleaguered though he might be in London, the French commander-in-chief saw no reason to be sorry. He had captured the capital, and with it he would make his own terms of peace. So he kept the good Londoners hard at work, fed them on very small rations, made the approach to the metropolis very difficult of attack, kept up his communications with Dover, and by means of his cavalry, which was large, kept "touch" of the English forces, and was well informed of their whereabouts.

It is possible that had he been a great

soldier, which happily he was not, he would have contented himself with taking London, and would have pushed onward against the concentrating English forces with his united armies, striking them a paralyzing blow before they were ready for him. What would have been the result, for instance, had he advanced rapidly at the head of the troops that came from Dover and those who landed on the Essex coast, it is difficult to say. He had always to maintain his communications, it is true, but he might have crushed the power gathering against him, and by a series of rapid movements have forced England to submit. But he contented himself with resting on the metropolis, waiting for reinforcements, and pillaging the people. Perhaps there

learning a lesson which she would have done well never to have disregarded ; namely, that a great city in the hands of a rough soldiery will inevitably suffer plunder, unless the organization and administration of the victorious army be exceptionally perfect, as it was in the case of the German forces.

French armies are only noted for love of excesses and want of discipline.

ENGLAND RECOVERS.

As the days passed by, this appeared plainer and plainer. News came from abroad too that did not tend to sustain the once boisterous spirits of the French. The gallant Sikhs, Ghoorkas, Punjabees, and English were landed in Egypt, under the command of an experienced general from India—General Roberts—who had routed the French army in the neighbourhood of Cairo, and were driving the invader towards Alexandria with much rapidity.

The English fleet, too, had never quite lost, by a happy piece of luck, the command of the head of the Suez Canal, and was coming through.

Then news came of a great naval fight just off Alexandria, in which the old pluck of the British tar had as-

serted itself, and although a loss of a couple of English ironclads was chronicled, the victory was with the Union Jack.

Ships of war were coming homewards too from the Atlantic, and a very respectable fleet had been formed of the Channel and North American squadrons, with which much execution at sea was done, and by which Dover had been for several days incessantly bombarded.

While, better still, the sturdy Britons of the north and the north-east had formed junction at York, and a large force was now moving southwards, to the relief of the two armies that had been cut off from London.

There were attacks, too, being made upon the French line of communications

between London and the south ; and altogether, the prospects of the invaders were not so pleasant as they had been at first.

Nearly a million and a quarter of men, most of whom, at some time or other, had had some kind of drilling, were now under the orders of the English generals, and were preparing to harass the French forces.

A change took place for the better in English affairs.

The English fleet blockaded the mouth of the Thames, and took every precaution that could be devised, after having defeated that portion of the French fleet that came against it, to prevent another sortie.

The land forces advancing from the

north-west effected a junction with what had before been the Guildford army, swelling its numbers to nearly half a million.

Those coming from the north-east by way of York succoured what had previously been the Essex army, and made it also enormously powerful.

Each army by this time had a fairly competent and active commander.

England was at length waking up.

But all this while as has been said the scenes that were being enacted inside the metropolis surpassed the roughest treatment that had been anticipated. The shops were systematically plundered, the contents of the banks confiscated, the people were beaten, the women insulted, while many persons were put to death

by the brutal soldiery who occupied the capital. The treasures of art which had been collected in past years were either destroyed or stolen. The ships in the docks were emptied. There were no bounds to the violent and barbaric behaviour of the "politest nation in Europe." The enemy behaved as Frenchmen always do under similar circumstances.

One fact contributed at this moment to the hopefulness of the English; it was this:—

Sir Daniel Lysons, who for some years had been shelved, owing to petty jealousies in high places, was nominated commander-in-chief of the larger army, namely, that of Guildford, till now under the command of Lord Wolseley, while

the latter officer was sent to command the Essex army, with instructions not to risk a fight unless absolutely obliged to do so.

A change speedily came over the aspect of affairs; for General Lysons immediately assumed the offensive, and cutting the communications of the French with Dover, began in real earnest to block the metropolis.

The result was a sharp and decisive battle in the neighbourhood of Kingston, in which the English succeeded in destroying a couple of French army corps, and causing the French commander-in-chief to assume a far less confident tone than before.

The dispositions of General Lysons left him, moreover, no room for success-

ful strategy. Three or four sorties from the capital in different directions only met with repulse. It was getting clear that though the French had London, they would not be able to leave it in a hurry.

On the other hand, however, it was deemed impossible by the English commanders to attempt to retake the huge capital. Filled with English people, the slaughter involved would have been immense and unjustifiable; it could not have been excused on any ground.

At this juncture, the French general made an offer which was thought worthy of consideration.

Viewing the untoward position of the French fleet, which was shut up in the Thames, and his own position as well, he had come to the determination to

offer to evacuate the country peacefully, on the condition that the French navy should also be allowed to go two clear days before any English ships should follow them—he demanding the right to leave England by way of the tunnel, and leaving it afterwards to the two Governments either to continue the war or make peace on any terms that might hereafter be proposed.

In default of such an arrangement being accepted, he had an alternative—a terrible one: he would lay London in ashes, and fight his way out. The responsibility of the death of the tens of thousands of English women and children who must share the fate of London in such an event he laid at the door of those who might refuse his offer.

The proposal was at first received by the English with scorn.

The invader was trapped and should be destroyed. So shouted everybody.

But then came the thought of the fate of the great city and its inhabitants, and the well-known recklessness of the French was remembered.

Then, too, came a petition from the beleaguered millions of London, imploring their fellow-countrymen not to sacrifice them to a feeling of foolish revenge or a desire for glory.

The decision was a desperate one, but it must be taken at once.

A council sat at York, and, after much anxious deliberation, it was determined to accept the French offer.

A truce was consequently agreed upon,

followed by three weeks' armistice; and next day saw the French army issue forth from London in great pomp, bearing with it much spoil that could not be taken from it, and moving upon Dover.

It was a terrible blow to English pride, but the spectacle had to be borne. London wrecked and almost ruined, was at any rate glad that, in addition, it had not been sacked and burnt.

With much precision, then, the French army moved down to the tunnel, followed closely, of course, by Sir Daniel Lysons' army, which left no precaution untaken to prevent a surprise from the perfidious French.

Till at last Dover saw the arrival of the invading army, flushed with the

triumph it had achieved, and hilarious at the trick it had played John Bull.

The trains through the tunnel now began to take away the Frenchmen, while French ships of war, under the terms of the armistice, embarked many regiments, and conveyed them to France; till one morning saw the last Frenchman quit English soil, and a great ovation given on the other side of the Channel to the so-called conquerors.

There was one act which followed the departure of that last Frenchman.

The tunnel only survived his leave-taking sufficiently long to let him get through.

With a crash that resounded for miles, a huge mass of dynamite was exploded in its interior, the sea rushed

down into the avenue which human art had created, and the tunnel was no more!

“We will consider later on,” said the authorities, “whether any indemnity be due to the men who brought England to such grief. For the present all we have to do is to destroy this pernicious source of danger to the island, and put an end to the possibility of another invasion.”

England was too much injured by the war to indulge in any uproarious celebration of this second “Tunnel opening,” but received the news of the dynamite explosion with much thankfulness.

France, on its part, being beaten in Egypt, saw no use in continuing the

war, and content with the laurels her army had gained, agreed to allow Russia to mediate between her and Great Britain.

And in this country the costliness of the war was so tremendous that the chance of peace was hailed with much satisfaction. It was felt that no permanently good results could come of a continuation of the expensive struggle.

A treaty of peace was accordingly shortly signed between the two nations, and the war came to a conclusion.

But the remembrance of the taking of the Tunnel never left the English, who, whenever the ills and inconveniences of sea-sickness were alluded to by people who suffered in crossing the Channel, reminded themselves and the

complainants of the Dover incident, and declared that they would rather suffer sea-sickness for ever than again allow London to be captured by means of a Channel Tunnel.

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